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SLUG FOR WHA/AND AND S/CT MICHELLE ARIAS

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [PREL](#) [KCRM](#) [KJUS](#) [CO](#)
SUBJECT: EMBASSY BOGOTA REPLY REGARDING THE AUC'S FTO
DESIGNATION

REF: STATE 58310

Classified By: Political Counselor John S. Creamer
Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY

1. (U) Over 32,000 former United Self Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) paramilitaries have demobilized since 2002 and the elimination of its national command structure significantly reduced the group's terrorist activities. Still, a human rights group reports that AUC offshoots committed 358 violations of international humanitarian law in 2006. Similarly, OAS Mission in Support of the Peace Process (MAPP/OAS) analysts believe that many new criminal groups use similar structures, people and networks as the former AUC, but on a smaller scale. The GOC position is that the AUC no longer exists, and its continued inclusion on the FTO list would not reflect the reality on the ground. End Summary

AUC DEMOBILIZATION

2. (U) Over 32,000 former United Self Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) paramilitaries have demobilized since 2002. This has resulted in the Justice and Peace Law (JPL) process, the largest reintegration program ever attempted. In addition to the demobilization, most former AUC high-level leaders are in jail in Colombia, have been extradited, or are dead. The GOC extradited 15 AUC leaders, including Salvador Mancuso and Diego Murillo, to the United States in May. Other AUC leaders who continued their illegal activities have recently been captured or killed, including Feris Chadid, captured April 16, Victor Manuel Mejia Munera, killed April 29, and his twin brother, Miguel Angel, captured on May 1. The Mejia Munera brothers, known together as Los Mellizos, were key in rebuilding criminal-narco networks from Bolivar to Norte de Santander departments.

VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

3. (U) The elimination of the national military and leadership command structure of the AUC significantly reduced the group's terrorist activities. Still, in 2006, the year the AUC demobilization concluded, Colombian human rights

group CINEP (Center of Investigation and Education) reported that paramilitaries (groups which CINEP considers direct offspring of the AUC) conducted 358 violations of international humanitarian law, including kidnappings, murders, and the exercise of social control over territory. CINEP data for 2007 is not yet available.

CRIMINAL GROUPS WITH POLITICAL IDEOLOGY

¶4. (C) The vacuum created by the demobilization of the AUC has permitted the growth of new criminal groups. The CNP estimates these groups to number approximately 2200 members--compared to over 30,000 in the AUC. Local journalist Marta Ruiz told us, "this new enemy is a monster with two heads, it has the excessive ambition of the mafia, and the cruelty without limits of the paras." Members of the new criminal groups fall into three categories: 1) AUC dissidents who never demobilized, 2) demobilized who have rearmed or rejoined armed groups, or 3) newly emerged criminal groups. The new groups operate in four major regions: the north Atlantic coast; Antioquia and Uraba; Valle del Cauca to Narino; and the south-eastern regions of Meta and Vichada. Gustavo Duncan, a security analyst, states the groups fight over territory, production, and control of narcotrafficking corridors. Using tactics similar to the AUC, MAPP/OAS reports the groups target the demobilized and unemployed youth for forced recruitment.

¶5. (C) The new groups are largely criminal, not political, in nature, but a few are clear offspring of the AUC and maintain its political ideology. The CNP reports groups such as the New Generation Organization (ONG) in Narino and the Aguilas Negras del Santander maintain the former AUC's counterinsurgency line and seek the social control of territories. MAPP/OAS analysts report that some groups have the same structure, people and networks as the former AUC but on a much smaller scale. The MAPP/OAS eleventh draft report notes with concern that AUC spin-off groups are responding to the GOC's aggressive strategy to contain their activities with targeted murders of military and judicial authorities. MAPP/OAS cautions that the groups pose a threat to the long-term success of the peace process.

CONTINUITY OF LEADERSHIP

¶6. (SBU) There is a continuity of leadership from the AUC to some new criminal groups. Daniel Rendon (Don Mario)--a former mid-level AUC commander and brother of former AUC Elmer Cardenas Block commander Freddy Rendon (El Aleman)--now heads an Uraba-based group which is battling other criminal groups for control of narcotrafficking routes. Media sources attribute over 400 murders in the Uraba region since January to the conflict, and violent crime in Cordoba reportedly rose 37% in the first quarter of 2008 as compared to last year. Such killings have been sometimes called "social cleansing." Rendon, who demobilized under the paramilitary peace process but later returned to crime, is recruiting former demobilized paras into his ranks.

¶7. (SBU) Don Mario's close ally, Pedro Oliverio Guerrero Castillo (Cuchillo) commands the Anti-Subversive Revolutionary Popular Army, which has a substantial military capacity and operates in Meta and Vichada. Guerrero is another former AUC leader who continued illegal activities after demobilization. Guerrero is believed to have killed AUC rival Miguel Arroyave in 2004. He is one of Colombia's most wanted criminals and faces charges of homicide, extortion, forced disappearance, and narcotics trafficking.

LINKS TO THE GOC

¶8. (C) The ability of the demobilized AUC to regenerate their criminal groups is due in part to local corruption within the Colombian National Police (CNP), military, and

local government. The GOC has not been able to root out corrupt local officials, which has hampered its efforts to combat the threat. A local security analyst reported that many local police outside urban areas remain complicit in narcotrafficking activities. He described one incident when a local sergeant showed him a bag of 5 million Colombian pesos (about U.S. 2500), which he said was an offer from an emerging group.

VICTIMS AT RISK

19. (SBU) The MAPP/OAS' eleventh draft report says that as with the former AUC, communities affected by the new criminal groups face mobility restrictions, extortion, forced coca cultivation, threats, and assassination. As a result, the Colombian National Police (CNP) launched a protection program for victims of paramilitary crimes participating in the Justice and Peace Law (JPL) process. The CNP protects 36 high-risk municipalities, where large numbers of victims reside. Police provide perimeter protection, community liaison, and enhanced intelligence collection to increase security, preempt threats, and catch those making the threats.

GOC VIEW

10. (SBU) Embassy informed Vice-Foreign Minister Camilo Reyes and Peace Commissioner Luis Carlos Restrepo of the review. Restrepo said the GOC position is that the AUC no longer exists. The GOC has extradited key former AUC leaders, and the rank and file have demobilized. New illegal

armed groups are focused on criminal activity, and play no political role. He said continued inclusion of the AUC on the FTO list would not reflect the facts on the ground and would cause political problems for the GOC.

STANFORD